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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 08 NAIROBI 000057

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SUBJECT: Somalia - The TFG After One Year

CLASSIFIED BY: Robert Patterson, Counselor for Somalia Affairs, State Department, Somalia Unit; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

#### Summary

1. (C) President Sheikh Sharif's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) has survived its first year in office. A tumultuous 2009 saw the TFG initially benefit from the mid-January withdrawal of Ethiopian forces and from Sheikh Sharif's legitimacy with Somalis, only to be almost forced out of Mogadishu after al-Shabaab re-grouped and counter-attacked in May. Since then the TFG has made some small steps on governance. It has forged ties in the regions, made visible improvements in financial management, launched a limited but successful public outreach effort, managed difficult personnel decisions, made progress on the constitutional process, and has begun reform of its security forces, and has expanded international contacts with a view to obtaining support.

2. (C) Summary continued: Arguably as important as the TFG's incremental progress in governance, the government has avoided pitfalls that have torpedoed preceding TFGs. Although the government is an uneasy alliance of competing clans, ideologies, and personalities, it has steered clear of the public rifts that ended the Abdullahi Yusuf administration. Security forces associated with the TFG have not eroded public support by extorting money at vehicle checkpoints. The government retains the backing of a public anxious for stability, but not at any price. At great personal risk, the TFG leadership has spent more time grappling with problems in Mogadishu and less time in foreign capitals than its predecessors.

3. (C) Summary continued: The TFG's accomplishments one year after coming to power are of course quite limited when measured against the enormous challenges it faces. It has a foothold in Mogadishu thanks only to the presence of AMISOM. It confronts adversaries who, while arguably weaker than they were, remain determined and resourceful, and who only have to destroy, not build, to assert control. Its efforts receive only minimal direct financial and other support from the international community, which has slowed if not made impossible its progress on key tasks. Some of its ministers are more interested in personal gain than in seeing the government succeed. It is too often held hostage to Somalia's clan dynamics. Its key personalities frequently demonstrate an appalling lack of leadership and judgment. It has repeatedly failed to make good on promises that it would take

control of large swathes of Mogadishu.

¶4. (C) Summary continued: Still, the TFG's modest progress to date has created a fragile foundation for future forward movement. Progress, if it continues, will remain much slower than Somalia's friends would like it to be. Capitalizing on the TFG's incremental advances will require more systematic and more agile USG and international community engagement. The UN Special Representative's efforts to create an integrated UN mission on Somalia are a good first step at regularizing the international community's work. UN Nairobi-led efforts to create sectoral working groups, composed of international community and TFG representatives, to address the pressing challenges the TFG faces are also welcome.

¶5. (C) The Innumerable challenges faced by the TFG and the well-deserved criticisms of its performance have been documented by us and others and cannot be understated. This report, while mindful of and agreeing with many of those criticisms, attempts to present some of the incomplete, yet significant and often overlooked, steps Sheikh Sharif's TFG has taken toward governance during its first year. End summary.

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Successful Regional Outreach

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¶6. (C) The TFG in recent months has made increasingly credible outreach to Somalia's regions as a result of strong leadership by President Sharif and a possible shift in internal TFG dynamics:

B7 Sharif in December played a key role in resolving a leadership dispute in Galmuduug region and encouraged local governance initiatives there, despite the objection of some TFG ministers more interested in personal gain than in forward movement on decentralization and governance.

B7 President Sharif and Prime Minister Sharmarke in mid-December shored up the TFG's long-languishing relationship with the powerful Ayr sub-clan through outreach to the Ayr-dominated ASWJ faction in the Galgaduud region and rapprochement with Ayr opinion maker and key figure in the Djibouti peace process Ahmed Abdisalaam Aden, according to Ayr and ASWJ contacts.

B7 The TFG in early November accepted the rejection by local clan leaders of its unpopular appointee for governor of Hiraan region. The compromise bought the TFG greater respect in the region and encouraged broader clan militia cooperation with TFG-aligned forces there. The Minister who had attempted to appoint the unpopular would-be governor has lost influence in the TFG, according to TFG contacts. Hiraan contacts tell us they are advising Sharif to again support Hiraan with credible TFG interlocutors, as he did with the late Minister of National Security Omar Hashi, a well-respected Hiraan native. (Note: In June 2009, Sharif sent Hashi to Hiraan region in order to forge an alliance with local clan leaders. Hashi was making significant strides in the region when he was assassinated by al-Shabaab on June 18.)

B7 The TFG, despite President "Farooole's" persistent

attempts to undermine the TFG-Puntland relationship, in August reached an agreement with the Puntland Administration. According to multiple Puntland contacts, several TFG officials with clan ties to the region are working with Puntland political and civil society leaders to contain "Farooole's" destructive behavior.

B7           The TFG Health Minister in recent months forged a close working relationship with Health Ministers from Somaliland and Puntland in planning and coordination with the international community, according to Somaliland, Puntland, and south-central Somali contacts.

B7           TFG outreach over recent months reportedly played a role in the defection of two senior al-Shabaab commanders and numerous al-Shabaab fighters.

¶7.           (C) Perhaps as important to developments in the regions as the TFG's efforts to build coalitions, is the fact that the TFG exists at all. Since surviving an all-out assault by al-Shabaab in May - June, there has been no further talk of the TFG being in danger of failing, although it remains of course at risk from terrorist attacks. Its continued existence, even in its current, weakened form, appears to foster cohesion among local entities that, without the promise of support from a central government, might fracture further into local, competing sub-entities. Hiraan

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contacts, for example, tell us that the Hawaadle clan, the dominant clan in Hiraan region, in recent months ended internal rifts after it began to receive greater attention from TFG MPs from the region.

#### Progress in Financial Management and Transparency

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¶8.           (C) The TFG has made efforts to regularize and make transparent its financial procedures. The rumors of widespread corruption that dogged preceding Somali governments have not, so far, surfaced with the Sheikh Sharif administration. It is certain, of course, in a country as poor as Somalia, that port revenues are being underreported, cash contributions from friendly countries are being skimmed, and donated guns are being monetized in the Bakara market. Nevertheless:

B7           In April and May 2009, the TFG provided the international community with an accounting of its revenues and expenditures.

B7           The TFG has signed and implemented an agreement with Price Waterhouse Cooper that has provided welcome transparency to a portion of its financial flows.

B7           The government has unveiled a 2010 budget that, while not as detailed as one would hope, is a good stepping-off point for budgets to come.

B7           The TFG has initialed an agreement with a consortium of Dubai-based Somali businessmen that, when implemented, should

regularize the operations of the its chief source of revenue, the Mogadishu port. All revenues are to be funneled through the Central Bank of Somalia, whose books will be regularly examined by outside auditors.

B7 In the absence of significant and predictable international community financial support, the TFG has become increasingly adept at discovering other sources of income. It has recently concluded an agreement that will allow it to levy a small tax on livestock exported from Somalia to Saudi Arabia at the port of entry. It is anticipated that the agreement could net the TFG \$300,000 per year.

B7 The TFG has actively recruited financial professionals from the diaspora. The Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Somalia and a key advisor to the Minister of Finance have been induced to return to Somalia thanks to strenuous lobbying by the TFG.

B7 The TFG has strived to pay at least a percentage, however small, of civil service, Parliamentary, and Security Sector salaries from its own non-donor resources. Scant resources have hampered its efforts.

#### Making Difficult Personnel Changes

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19. (C) Clan, religious, and personal connections are factors in every personnel decision made by the TFG as it seeks to broaden its base. The sprawling size of the cabinet, which currently features 45 ministerial-level positions, is an unfortunate by-product of these factors. Tensions between former Islamic Courts Union ministers and the original TFG contingent remain, and warlords became a necessary evil when the TFG found itself under siege in May and June. Still:

B7 Warlord Police Commissioner "Qeybdiid" was eased to the margins of the government in favor of a former Siad Barre-era law enforcement professional. His marginalization leaves only the warlords Minister of State for Defense "Indha Adde" and Minister for Agriculture "Habsade" in place. The former is an example of TFG outreach to a former opponent, and he has arguably burned his bridges with former TFG adversaries and must remain allied with the TFG. The latter, "Habsade," seems to have lost any independent power base, now that he has moved to Mogadishu from his clan capital of Baidoa.

B7 The underperforming armed forces commander, who had been an enlisted man in the Barre era, has been replaced by someone with the proper military credentials. It is too early to gauge his performance.

B7 The government is significantly less reliant on warlords than its predecessors. While generational change is partially responsible, so is the conviction that warlords who graced, and even headed, past governments have no place in this one.

B7 The Prime Minister promises rapid removal of the current,

corrupt Mogadishu port's management. The port is the TFG's chief source of revenue, and regularizing its operations should increase revenue and enhance the TFG's credibility with Somalis.

B7           A weak Information Minister, who was hobbled by his sub-clan's ties to al-Shabaab, has been replaced. His energetic successor has invigorated the TFG's media presence. He single-handedly raised money from the diaspora for Radio Mogadishu's transmitter, and has used it to broadcast the government's message. Radio Mogadishu is apparently hitting the mark: al-Shabaab has forbidden Somalis from tuning in to its broadcasts.

B7           The TFG recently replaced the Benadir Administration governor who achieved little in the area of service delivery. The new governor is reportedly using revenues to pay street cleaners.

#### Focus on Transitional Tasks

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¶10. (C) Some observers fear that the TFG sees itself as the permanent government of Somalia, and is not sufficiently focused on its Charter-mandated transitional tasks. To the surprise of even attentive observers, however, many officials in Sharif's government appear well aware of its temporary status and have made credible progress on the transitional agenda:

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B7           The Constitutional Committee has been reconstituted to include a broader cross-section of the TFG and has begun training and consultations in preparation for a writing a draft of the constitution.

B7           The TFG has drafted a citizenship law, which it has presented to Parliament for consideration during the current session.

B7           The Civil Service Commission is functioning and the Reconciliation Commission has been formed.

B7           The Parliament has established key committees on transitional tasks. It has passed an anti-corruption bill and bills on the constitution-drafting process.

B7           A chief justice has been appointed and the structure of the judiciary has been mapped out.

#### Progress on Public Outreach

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¶11. (C) The TFG's outreach efforts remain weaker than al-Shabaab's, but they have improved with the replacement of the former Information Minister with media professional, Minister Gelleh in August 2009. Gelleh has become a very effective advocate

with the international community.

B7           The TFG, with diaspora money, has purchased and installed a transmitter for Radio Mogadishu. The government station broadcasts eighteen hours per day with a 100-kilometer radius. Its programs have struck a nerve with al-Shabaab, which has banned Somalis from listening to the station. Under Gelleh, the TFG has begun satellite broadcasts of Radio Mogadishu programs, and will soon begin live-streaming via dedicated internet.

B7           A log maintained by the Somalia Unit demonstrates that the TFG has begun using the media more actively than it did immediately after coming to power.

B7           With a prod from the Somalia Unit, which hired two media consultants in August 2009 to assess the TFG's media weaknesses, coordination among the TFG's offices has markedly improved.

The Toughest Task: Making Progress on Security Reform

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112. (C) For months, the TFG made little visible progress in merging the ragtag militias that comprise its security forces. The Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS) troops, TFG soldiers, clan militia remnants, Barre-era "grey soldiers," and TFG-affiliated warlord retinues at best co-existed; at worst, competed or even fought one another while nominally grouped under the banner of Sheikh Sharif's government. While tension still

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exists and cooperation can still be spotty, the buffer provided by AMISOM has given the TFG time to make some progress on one of its most intractable problems. The progress to date has not meant that the TFG has been able to increase its footprint in Mogadishu, but it is noteworthy nonetheless.

B7           After months of dissatisfaction with Armed Forces Commander "Dhumaal," who was reportedly a chauffeur to a Barre-era General before making his way to a command position, the TFG replaced him with Mohamed Gelle "Kahayi". "Kahayi," a German-Somali, brings more experience to the job and is reported to be approaching reform more systematically than "Dhumaal" did.

B7           AMISOM is training some of the TFG forces and, according to AMISOM Commander, General Mugisha, making good progress.

B7           The TFG is doing a more systematic job at integrating troops returning from training into its security forces.

B7           There are credible reports that TFG forces are now participating more actively in the small-scale skirmishes against al-Shabaab, Hisbul Islam, and other armed groups in Mogadishu. The long-promised "offensive for Mogadishu" has, however, failed to materialize.

¶13. (C) Criticism of Abdullahi Yusuf's TFG, especially in its dying days, was a standard feature of IGAD and AU discussions on Somalia. Although initially tentative, IGAD and the AU have recently become much more supportive of Sheikh Sharif's government. The communiqué from the most recent IGAD ministerial, on December 8, 2009, instead of complaining about TFG inertia, called on the international community to "recognize the efforts as well as the multiple challenges facing the TFG. . ." Speeches at the plenary were almost uniformly even more enthusiastic.

¶14. (C) The AU is preparing for its late-January Summit. We expect that it will continue to back the TFG. In its June 15, 2009, communiqué, it noted that it "fully supported" the TFG. The accompanying report even more emphatically reiterates the AU's backing for Sheikh Sharif's government.

¶15. (C) The communiqué of the December 17, 2009, International Contact Group (ICG) meeting on Somalia was similarly supportive. The 43 countries and organizations in attendance welcomed "the concrete progress made so far. . .by the TFG, which increases the confidence of the international community in its capacity to deliver. The ICG reiterates its full support for the TFG."

¶16. (C) Unfortunately, this verbal support has not translated into significant material aid to the government. Although the international community pledged \$213 million to the TFG and AMISOM at the December 2008 Brussels ICG, the government received confirmed contributions of less than \$7 million in 2009. Thus, except for the U.S., which has been consistent in its support, much of the international response to the TFG has been disappointing. Unlike its predecessors, this TFG has used its money to pay its MPs, security forces, government employees, and potential allies in

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the regions. The TFG's difficult financial circumstances have meant that the payments have been erratic, but they have been to an unprecedented degree more transparent than those of any preceding Somalia government. The lack of direct support to this TFG has been an obvious constraint on its efforts to gain traction.

#### Increasing Strains Degrade TFG Opponents

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¶17. (C) In contrast to the TFG's incremental progress, its two opponents, al-Shabaab and Hisbul Islam (HI), appear to be fracturing. Key HI factions have bolted, and some have been in discussion with the TFG. HI Chairman Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, whose return to Somalia in April 2009 was predicted by some to herald the end of the TFG, has instead presided over the disintegration of HI, and has in the bargain lost credibility among much of his Ayr sub-clan. Al-Shabaab and HI continue to pose a terrorist threat, and a single unfortunate VBIED could effectively decapitate the TFG leadership. But the TFG's adversaries have clearly failed to deliver a compelling political or religious message that resonates with the Somali people.



¶18. (C) The December 3, 2009, Banadir University suicide bombing brought into the open long-standing divisions within al-Shabaab. Some factions are publicly distancing themselves from al-Shabaab Emir Godane over the use of suicide bombings against Somali citizens. The prominent role of foreigners in the movement is also a bone of contention. While internal factors are most responsible for the fissures in both of the organizations, successful efforts by the regions to siphon away the rank-and-file have played a role. Improved TFG messaging may have contributed as well.

Comment

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¶19. (C) Sheikh Sharif's TFG has made only modest progress in its first year and has yet to blunt the threat of al-Shabaab. Unlike Abdullahi Yusuf's TFG, however, Sharif's is not opposed by any major clan block in Somalia, has enunciated strategies with which we largely agree in the areas of security reform, realistic economic steps, and political outreach, and enjoys broad regional support from its immediate Horn of Africa neighbors. Because he was chosen through the Djibouti peace process, Sharif is arguably the most legitimate leader Somalia has had in the past two decades. Again, unlike its predecessor, Sharif's TFG does not use the red flag of "terrorism" to settle scores with its clan enemies, a tactic that would only fuel al-Shabaab recruitment capabilities. Contacts from across clans, regions, and political affiliations as well as international Somalia experts often highlight this distinction. We believe that these crucial differences should also be factored into USG calculations about the future viability of the TFG in Somalia and about its appropriateness as a USG partner.

¶20. (C) Capitalizing on the TFG's modest gains will require more cohesive USG and international community engagement. The TFG would be best served by an approach that does not allow TFG officials to pick and choose among a variety of competing and sometimes counterproductive international community efforts. At a broad level, there is consensus among IGAD, the AU, and the Contact Group members that any new international mediation effort would merely embolden spoilers and undermine the TFG. More practically, the UN Special Representative's initiative to create an integrated UN mission for Somalia is a good first step in improving coordination. UN-led efforts to create working groups, composed of international community and TFG representatives, to address the challenges the

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TFG faces are also welcome. The USG has an opportunity to play a key role in this process. Septel will offer suggestions for next USG steps.  
RANNEBERGER